



WHEEL

Women's Housing, Equality and Enhancement League
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8 May 2007

Seattle Human Rights Commission
c/o the Seattle Office for Civil Rights
810 Third Avenue, Suite 750
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Commissioners:

Six years ago the women of WHEEL (a grassroots organizing effort of homeless and formerly homeless women) decided to stand silent Women in Black vigils whenever homeless people died outside or by violence in King County. The first year after we made that decision, we only stood five times. Ever since then, the number of outdoor and violent deaths has steadily risen, to crisis point. Last year, we stood for 59 people. Ten were murdered. Homeless people comprised 34% of all homicide victims in Seattle last year, yet make up less than 2% of the population.

We have witnessed firsthand the growing trend of violence against homeless people, and the resulting despair in the homeless community.

These are some of the reasons why we wholeheartedly support your efforts to revise Seattle Ordinance 120132 to include homeless people as a "protected class."

The Seattle Human Rights Commission has our permission to use WHEEL's name as an endorser of your efforts. WHEEL is glad to help in any educational efforts to build broad community support for the revisions. And finally, we'd be happy to address the Seattle City Council in support of these revisions.

We've attached both the lists of homeless people Women in Black have stood vigils for over the past six years (now totaling 231) and a recent A-P article about the rise of violence against homeless people.

We are also engaging in other efforts to protect the safety and dignity of homeless people. To us, that includes provision of enough emergency shelter for all who need it. We hope you support our survival efforts, too.

Thank you so much for your concern for the protection of homeless people and your important work on these Ordinance revisions. We would be happy to meet with your Commission at any time, and stand ready to help.

Sincerely,
Women of WHEEL

J. Z. Connelly *Betty Shannon*
WHEEL